اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 71 - Nuh (Noah)

سُوْرَةُ نُوْحٍ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖٓ اَنْ اَنْذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١﴾

(71-1) We sent Noah to his people (and directed him): "Warn your people before a grievous chastisement (1) comes upon them."

(1) "Warn your people": Warn them that the errors and moral evils that they were involved in would only earn them Allah's punishment if they did not desist from them, and tell them what way they should adopt in order to ward off that punishment.

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢﴾

(71-2) Noah said: "My people, I have certainly been sent as a clear warner to you,

اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاتَّقُوْهُ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ ﴿٣﴾

(71-3) that you serve Allah and fear Him, and follow me; (2)

(2) The three things which the Prophet Noah presented before his people at the outset of his mission of Prophethood were:

(1) Worship of Allah.

(2) Adoption of piety (taqwa).

(3) Obedience of the Messenger.

Worship of Allah meant that they should give up worship and service of all others and should acknowledge Allah alone as their Deity and should worship and carry out His commands alone. Taqwa (piety) meant that they should refrain from all those works which caused Allah's anger and displeasure, and should instead adopt such attitude in their lives as the God fearing people should adopt. As for "obey me", it meant that they should obey the commands that he gave them as Allah's Messenger.

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَ يُؤَخِّرْكُمْ اِلٰى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ؕ اِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰهِ اِذَا جَآءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ ۘ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾

(71-4) He will forgive your sins [3] and will grant you respite until an appointed term. [4] Indeed when Allah's appointed term comes, it cannot be deferred; [5] if you only knew!" [6]

(3) The sentence yaghfir la-kum min dhunub-i-kum in the original does not mean that Allah will forgive some of their sins, but its correct meaning is: If you accept and acknowledge the three things which are being presented before you, He will forgive all the sins that you have committed in the past.

(4) That is, if you accepted these three things, you would be given respite to live in the world until the time that Allah has appointed for your natural death.

(5) "A term appointed": The time fixed by Allah for sending down a torment on a people. In this regard the Quran has at several places stated explicitly that when Allah's torment has been decreed for a certain people, they are not pardoned even if they affirm the faith after it.

(6) That is, if you come to know that the time which is now passing after you have received Allah's message through me is, in fact, a period of respite that has been granted to you for affirming the faith and there is no chance of escape from Allah's torment after the term of respite has elapsed, you would testify to the

faith without delay and would not like to postpone it until the torment actually started descending on you.

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیۡ دَعَوۡتُ قَوۡمِیۡ لَیۡلًا وَّ نَہَارًا ۙ﴿۵﴾

(71-5) He said: [7] “My Lord, I called my people by night and by day,

(7) Omitting the history of a long period of preaching, now the Prophet Noah’s petition that he made to Allah in the last stage of his worldly mission is being related.

فَلَمۡ یَزِدۡہُمۡ دُعَآءِیۡۤ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿۶﴾

(71-6) but the more I called, the farther they fled. [8]

(8) That is, as I went on calling them towards You, they went on fleeing farther and farther away from You.

وَ اِنِّیۡ کُلَّمَا دَعَوۡتُہُمۡ لِتَغۡفِرَ لَہُمۡ جَعَلُوۡۤا اَصَابِعَہُمۡ فِیۡۤ اٰذَانِہِمۡ وَ اسۡتَغۡشَوۡا ثِیَابَہُمۡ وَ اَصَرُّوۡا وَ اسۡتَکۡبَرُوا اسۡتِکۡبَارًا ۚ﴿۷﴾

(71-7) And every time I called them so that You might forgive them, [9] they thrust their fingers into their ears and wrapped up their faces with their garments [10] and obstinately clung to their attitude, and waxed very proud. [11]

(9) “That you may forgive them”: That they might give up their attitude of disobedience and beg forgiveness of Allah, for in that way alone they could be forgiven by Allah.

(10) They covered their faces either because they did not even like to have a look at Prophet Noah’s (peace be upon him) face,

not to speak of listening to what he said, or they did so in order to hide their own faces from him as they passed by him so that he could not recognize and address them. This precisely was the attitude and conduct which the disbelievers of Makkah were adopting towards the Prophet (peace be upon him). In (Surah Hud, Ayat 5), their attitude has been described thus: Behold, they turn aside their chests in order to hide themselves from him: Beware, even when they cover themselves up with their garments, Allah knows alike what they hide and what they show. He indeed knows even the secrets they conceal in their breasts. For explanation, see (E.Ns 5, 6 of Surah Hud).

(11) Arrogance implies that they thought it was below their dignity to bow before the truth and accept the admonition of Allah's Messenger. As for example, if a gentleman admonishes a perverted person and he, in response, shakes his head and walks away haughtily, this would amount to rejecting the admonition with arrogance.

ثُمَّ اِنِّيْ دَعَوْتُهُمْ جِهَارًا ۝٨

(71-8) Then I summoned them openly,

ثُمَّ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَنْتُ لَهُمْ وَ اَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ اِسْرَارًا ۝٩

(71-9) and preached to them in public, and also addressed them in secret.

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ۝١٠

(71-10) I said to them: "Ask forgiveness from your Lord; surely He is Most Forgiving.

يُّرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا ۝١١

(71-11) He will shower upon you torrents from heaven,

وَّ يُمْدِدْكُمْ بِاَمْوٰلٍ وَّ بَنِيْنَ وَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ اَنْهٰرًا ﴿۱۲﴾

(71-12) and will provide you with wealth and children, and will bestow upon you gardens and rivers. (12)

(12) This theme has been expressed at several places in the Quran that the rebellious attitude against God causes man to lead a wretched life not only in the Hereafter but also in this world, Contrary to this, if a nation adopts the way of faith and piety and obedience to divine commands, instead of disobedience, it benefits it not only in the Hereafter but also in the world; it is favored with every kind of blessing. In Surah Ta Ha it has been said: And whoever turns away from My admonition, will have a wretched life in the world, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection. (Verse 124). In Surah Al-Maidah it has been said: Had the people of the Book observed the Torah and the Gospel and the other Books which had been sent down by their Lord, abundance of provisions would have been given to them from above and from beneath.(Verse 66). In Surah Al-Araf : Had the people of the settlements believed and adopted the way of piety, We would have opened on them doors of blessings from the heavens and the earth. (Verse 96). In Surah Hud, the Prophet Hud (peace be upon him) addressed his people, saying: And O my people, beg forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him in penitence, and He will open the gates of heavens for you and add more strength to your present strength.(Verse 52). Through the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself in this very Surah Hud, the people of Makkah have been admonished to the effect: And you should beg forgiveness of your Lord, then return to Him, and He will provide you with good provisions of life till an appointed term. (Verse 3). According to the Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to the Quraish: There is a word which if you accept, would enable you to rule over the Arab as well as the non- Arab world. (For explanation, see (E.N. 96 of Surah Al- Maidah); (E.Ns 3, 57 of Surah Hud); (E.N. 105 of Ta Ha); Introduction to Surah Sad).

Acting on this same instruction from the Quran, once during a famine Umar came out to invoke Allah for the rain and begged

only forgiveness of Him. The people said: O commander of the faithful, you have not prayed for the rain. He replied: I have knocked at the doors of heaven wherefrom the rain is sent down, and then he recited these verses of Surah Nooh to them. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir). Likewise, when in the assembly of Hasan Basri, a person complained of drought, he said to him “Beg forgiveness of Allah.” Another person complained of poverty, a third one said that he was not being blessed with children, a fourth one said that his harvest had failed, and he continued to remind everyone to beg forgiveness of Allah. The people asked: How is it that you have suggested to all the people one and the same cure for the different complaints? He in response recited these verses of Surah Nooh to them. (Al-Kashshaf).

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ وَقَارًا ﴿١٣﴾

(71-13) What is amiss with you that you do not look forward to the majesty of Allah (13)

(13) It means: as for the petty chiefs of the world, you think it would be dangerous to do anything against their dignity, but as for the Creator and Lord of the universe, you do not expect that He would also be a Being endowed with dignity. You rebel against Him, associate others in His Divinity, disobey His commands, and yet you are not at all afraid that He would punish you for your misconduct.

وَ قَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ اَطْوَارًا ﴿١٤﴾

(71-14) when He has created you in stages? (14)

(14) That is, He has brought you to the present stage after passing you through different stages of creation and phases of development. In the beginning you lay in the form of

sperm and ovum separately in the loins of your father and mother. Then the two were combined by the power of Allah and

you were conceived. Then for nine months in the womb of the mother you were gradually formed into a perfect human form and were endowed with all those capabilities which you needed to function as a man in the world. Then you came out as a child from the mother's womb, and you were developed from one state to another constantly until you attained to full youth and then old age. While passing through all these stages you lay wholly in the power of Allah at all times. Had He so willed, He would not have allowed you to be conceived but allowed another person to be conceived in your place. Had He so pleased, He would have made you blind, deaf, dumb, or a cripple in the mother's womb itself, or made you mentally deficient. Had He so liked, you would not have been born as a living child. Even after your birth He could have destroyed you any time by causing you to fall a victim to one or other accident suddenly. About that God under Whose power you are so powerless, how could you have taken it into your head that you could commit any insolence against Him, could regard Him with every treachery and ingratitude, could rebel against Him as and when you pleased, and could do all this with impunity?

اَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيۡفَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ۙ ١٥

(71-15) Do you not see how Allah has created seven heavens, one upon the other,

وَّ جَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيۡهِنَّ نُوۡرًا وَّ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا ١٦

(71-16) and has placed the moon in them as a light, and the sun as a radiant lamp?

وَ اللّٰهُ اَنۡۢبَتَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ نَبَاتًا ١٧

(71-17) And Allah has caused you to grow out of the earth so wondrously, (15)

)15(Here, the creation of man out of the substances of the earth has been compared to the growth of vegetation. Just as at one time there was no vegetation on the earth, then Allah caused it to grow, so at one time man did not exist, then Allah created him.

ثُمَّ يُعِيۡدُكُمۡ فِيۡهَا وَ يُخۡرِجُكُمۡ اِخۡرَاجًا ﴿۱۸﴾

(71-18) and He will later cause you to return to it and will then again bring you out of it.

وَ اللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الۡاَرۡضَ بِسَاطًا ﴿۱۹﴾

(71-19) Allah has made the earth a wide expanse for you

لِّتَسۡلُكُوۡا مِنۡهَا سُبُلًا فِجَاجًا ﴿۲۰﴾

(71-20) so that you may tread its spacious paths.”

قَالَ نُوۡحٌ رَّبِّ اِنَّهُمۡ عَصَوۡنِىۡ وَ اتَّبَعُوۡا مَنۡ لَّمۡ يَزِدۡهُ مَالُهٗ وَ وَلَدُهٗۤ اِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿۲۱﴾

(71-21) Noah said: “My Lord, they did not pay heed to what I said, and followed those (nobles) whose possession of wealth and children has led them to an even greater loss.

وَ مَكَرُوۡا مَكۡرًا كُبَّارًا ﴿۲۲﴾

(71-22) They contrived a plot of great magnitude. (16)

(16) “Mighty plot”: All those deceits, deceptions and frauds which the chiefs and religious guides were employing in an attempt to mislead the common people against the teachings of the Prophet Noah. For example, they said: Noah is no more than a mere man like yourselves. How can one believe that Allah sends down Revelations to him? (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 63); (Surah Hud, Ayat 27). We

also see that only the meanest of us have become his followers without due thought. Had there been some weight in what he says, the elders of the people would have believed in him.(Surah Hud, Ayat 27). Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels. (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 24). Had he been sent by Allah, he would possess treasures, he would know the unseen, and he would be free from all human needs, like the angels (Surah Hud, Ayat 31). We find nothing in him that might give him superiority over us. (Surah Hud, Ayat 27). He merely intends to obtain superiority over you. (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 24). Obviously, this man is possessed. (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 25). Similar were the things that the Quraish chiefs said to mislead the people against the Prophet (peace be upon him).

وَ قَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ اٰلِهَتَكُمْ وَ لَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَّ لَا سُوَاعًا وَّ لَا يَغُوْثَ وَ يَعُوْقَ وَ نَسْرًا ﴿۲۳﴾

(71-23) They said: “Do not abandon your deities; do not abandon Wadd, nor Sowa, nor Yaghuth, nor Yauq, nor Nasr. (17)

(17) Of the gods of the Prophet Noah’s people only those gods have been mentioned whom later the people of Arabia had also started worshipping and whose shrines were found all over the country at the advent of Islam. It is not impossible that the later generations heard the names of the ancient gods of Noah’s people from the people who were saved from the flood, and when ignorance once again spread among their children, they made idols of the same gods and started worshipping them again.

Wadd was the god of the Bani Kalb bin Wabash, a branch of the Qudaah tribe, whose shrine had been built at Daumat al-Jandal. In the ancient Arabian inscriptions he has been named as Waddam ibam (father Wadd). Kalbi has stated that the image built to him was of a man of enormous size. The Quraish also acknowledged him as god and called him Wudd. It is after him that a person has been named Abd-i Wudd (slave of Wudd) in history.

Suwa was the goddess of the Hudhayl tribe and her idol was a female figure. Her temple was situated at Ruhat near Yanbu.

Yaghuth was the god of Anum, a branch of the Tay tribe, and of some branches of the Madhjih tribe. The people of Madhjih had installed its idol, the image of a lion, at Jurash, a place between Yaman and Hijaz. Among the Quraish also some people had been named Abd-i Yaghuth.

Yauq was the god of Khaywan, a branch of the Hamdan tribe, in the territory of Hamdan in Yaman; its idol was of the horse's figure.

Nasr was the god of Al-i dhul-Kula, a branch of the Himyar tribe, in the territory of Himyar; it had its idol installed at Balkha and had the image of the vulture. In the ancient inscriptions of Saba its name has been written as Nasor. Its temple was called bayt Nasor (house of Nasor) and its devotees ahl Nasor (people of Nasor). The ruins of the ancient temples that are found in Arabia and in the adjoining lands have the image of the vulture made on the doors of most of them.

وَ قَدۡ اَضَلُّوۡا كَثِيۡرًا ۚ وَ لَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ اِلَّا ضَلٰلًا ۖ ٢٤

(71-24) They have misled many. So do not enable these evildoers to increase in anything except straying (from the Right Way)." (18)

(18) As we have explained in the introduction to this Surah, the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him) did not invoke this curse out of impatience but he invoked it when, after doing full justice to the preaching of his mission for many centuries, he became totally despaired of any success with his people. Similar were the conditions under which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had also cursed Pharaoh and his people, thus: Lord, destroy their wealth and harden their hearts in a manner so that they do not believe until they see the painful torment. And Allah, in response, had said: The prayer of you both has been granted (Surah Younus,

Ayats 88-89). Like the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), the Prophet Noah's (peace be upon him) curse was also in complete conformity with divine will. Thus, in Surah Hud, it has been said: And it was revealed to Noah (peace be upon him): No more of your people will believe in you now than those who have already believed. So, do not grieve at their misdeeds. (Verse 36).

مِمَّا خَطِ ۤيـٰٓـتِهِمْ اُغْرِقُوْا فَاُدْخِلُوْ ا نَارًا فَلَمْ يَجِدُوْ ا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْصَارًا ۝٢٥

(71-25) And so they were drowned on account of their sins, and then cast into the Fire, (19) and did not find any other than Allah, (20) to come forth to their help.

(19) That is, drowning was not their end, but after death their souls were immediately subjected to the punishment of the Fire. This precisely was the treatment that was meted out to Pharaoh and his people, as has been stated in (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 45-46). (For explanation, (see E.N. 63 of Surah Al-Momin). This verse also is of those verses which prove the punishment of barzakh (intermediary stage between death and Resurrection).

(20) That is, none of the gods whom they looked upon as their supporters and helpers came to their rescue. This, in fact, was a warning to the people of Makkah, as if to say: If you too are subjected to the torment of Allah, these gods on whom you have placed all your reliance, will avail you absolutely nothing.

وَ قَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا ۝٢٦

(71-26) Noah said: "My Lord, do not leave out of these unbelievers even a single dweller on earth,

اِنَّكَ اِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوْ ا عِبَادَكَ وَ لَا يَلِدُوْ ا اِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا ۝٢٧

(71-27) for certainly if You should leave them (alive), they will mislead Your servants, and will beget none but sinners and utter unbelievers.

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَ لِوَالِدَيَّ وَ لِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَّ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَ لَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا تَبَارًا ۲۸

(71-28) My Lord, forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer, and forgive all believers, both men and women, and do not increase the wrong-doers in anything except perdition."